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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: TBIO OTRA KSCA JO
SUBJECT: JORDAN COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR NIH EMPLOYEE SHADEN KAMHAWI

REF: SECSTATE 120799

¶1. (SBU) Embassy Amman grants country clearance and warmly welcomes the visit of NIH employee Dr. Shaden Kamhawi, to Jordan, September 5-16, 2007, for the purpose of visiting the Sand Fly Project field site and meeting with collaborators at the Jordan University of Science and Technology. All visitors to Jordan should carefully review this message, especially the threat assessment at paragraph 8.

¶2. (SBU) Control officer for this visit is Mr. Manu Bhalla, Regional Environment Officer. He can be reached at 962-6-590-6621 (office), 962-6-592-7653 (fax), 962-6-592-9849 (home) and 962-79-559-3873 (cell). The backup control officer will be Ms. Rana Safadi, Regional Environmental Specialist 962-6-590-6356 (office), 962-6-592-0124 (fax), 962-6-581-2324 (home), and 962-79-562-2773 (cell). The Embassy's after-hours telephone number is 962-6-590-6500.

¶3. (U) Post understands that no Embassy assistance is required.

¶4. (U) Valid visas are required for entry into Jordan. Visas may be obtained at Queen Alia airport though not at all land border crossings; however, Embassy Amman suggests visitors obtain their visas prior to arrival, as there can be long queues for visa issuance at the airport. Money can be exchanged at Queen Alia airport.

¶5. (U) ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES: Each visitor, regardless of length of stay, must have fiscal data to pay for direct costs of the visit. Each agency, organization, or visiting delegation will be charged for the actual costs attributed to the visit. Direct charge costs include, but are not limited to, American and LES overtime (for such services as airport expediting, cashier accommodation exchange, control room staffing, representational event support), travel and per diem costs incurred by post personnel in support of visitor's field travel, rental of vehicles and other equipment, long distance telephone calls, office supplies, gasoline and other vehicle maintenance costs, departure tax, and other airport fees.

¶6. (U) HEALTH: Although Jordan does not pose any unusual health hazards for visitors, the quality of health care facilities is not up to the U.S. or European standards, particularly outside of Amman.

As medications on the local economy are often in short supply, visitors should bring sufficient medications to post for their chronic medical problems. Immunizations should be current for Tetanus and Diphtheria, Hepatitis A and B. Visitors should drink bottled water rather than tap water. Food in the hotels and most restaurants is safe to eat, but some of the smaller local restaurants do not always observe proper food handling procedures.

Only those personnel covered under the State Department's medical program and who have a valid medical clearance for Jordan are eligible for a medical evacuation at USG cost. All other visitors are advised to have their own medical evacuation insurance to cover evacuation by air ambulance. Otherwise it will be necessary to ensure that the respective agency will cover any costs related to a medical evacuation. All local hospitals take major credit cards.

¶7. (U) SECURITY CLEARANCE AND BUILDING ACCESS: In compliance with State Department regulations and Embassy policies, visitors requesting unescorted access to the Embassy compound should inform RSO Amman of their security clearance level (if any) and should name the agency that granted that clearance. Telegrams containing this information should include the "ASEC" tag to ensure distribution to the RSO.

Electronic devices: RSO approval must be obtained before any electronic device is brought into the Embassy. Privately owned laptops and personal computers, peripherals, diskettes, and tapes are prohibited in all mission facilities. Cellular/mobile phones and palm pilots are prohibited in controlled access areas.

Travelers with USG-owned unclassified laptops or notebook computers, peripherals, diskettes, and tapes must receive RSO/IMO authorization before being granted access to U.S. Mission buildings. USG-owned classified computers must be sent to post via classified diplomatic pouch. Classified equipment must bear external USG bar-code inventory numbers and classification markings commensurate with the highest level of information processed on the system. Questions concerning other types of electronic devices and magnetic media may be directed to the RSO and IMO.

Mandatory personal security training: Per 04 STATE 66580, all employees traveling to post for 30 days or more (whether PCS or TDY) must have completed the mandatory personal security training (State Department Security Overseas Seminar or equivalent) before arriving at post. Agencies must provide the Chief of Mission with certification that this training will be completed prior to the employee's travel. Failure to do so will result in denial of country clearance.

¶8. (U) THREAT ASSESSMENT: The threat of terrorism remains high in Jordan. Transnational terrorist groups, as well as less sophisticated local elements, have demonstrated the capability to pose threats in Jordan. The Al-Qaida in Iraq network (AQIZ) in particular continues to focus its terrorist activities against U.S. and Government of Jordan (GOJ) targets in Jordan. AQIZ claimed responsibility for the November 9, 2005 bombings of three international hotels in Amman, which killed 60 people and injured over 100. Pedestrian suicide bombers wearing explosive vests carried the bombs into the hotels. AQIZ also claimed responsibility for the Aqaba rocket attacks on August 19, 2005, which killed one Jordanian soldier and wounded another. The assassination of American diplomat Larry Foley outside his west Amman residence on October 28, 2002 was also attributed to AQIZ leader Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, who was killed in Iraq in June 2006.

In addition, there has been a series of serious, confirmed terrorist threats and disrupted terrorist plots targeting U.S. or Jordanian interests in Jordan. In February 2006, the Government of Jordan (GOJ) disrupted a terrorist cell plotting to attack Queen Alia International Airport. In November 2005, the GOJ indicted six men for planning to carry out attacks against Americans at hotels and bars in Amman and Aqaba. In August-September 2005, four militants were arrested for plotting assassinations of Americans in Jordan. In July 2005, GOJ authorities arrested 17 men linked to AQIZ who had planned to assassinate GOJ officials and Americans in Jordan. In February 2005, four men were arrested for plotting attacks against GOJ officials, tourists and five-star hotels. In the same month, another four-man group was disrupted while plotting to attack liquor stores in Amman and foreign tourists in Aqaba.

Terrorists often do not distinguish between U.S. government personnel and private citizens. Terrorists may target areas frequented by Westerners, such as tourist sites, hotels, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, liquor stores, transportation hubs, places of worship, expatriate residential areas, and schools. In light of these security concerns, Americans are urged to maintain a high level of vigilance, to be aware of their surroundings, and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. It is especially important for travelers to be unpredictable by varying their times and routes and to maintain a low profile. Moreover, Americans are urged to avoid contact with any suspicious or unfamiliar objects and to immediately report the presence of such objects to the authorities.

Anti-American and anti-Western sentiment exists in Jordan and has been sparked on occasion by incidents in the region, particularly those related to Israeli/Palestinian issues and, to a lesser extent, Iraq. This may lead to random acts of violence against Westerners. On September 4, 2006, a gunman fired on foreigners at a popular tourist site in central Amman, killing one and injuring six.

Travelers are advised to avoid any demonstrations or large gatherings of people, especially during times of increased tension. Many demonstrations occur near mosques after Friday prayers. Consequently, special sensitivity and caution should be exercised at or near mosques and religious sites during holy days and the Friday Muslim Sabbath. Demonstrations also often take place at universities and refugee camps.

Crime is generally not a serious problem for travelers in Jordan, but petty crime is prevalent in the downtown Amman Hashimiyah Square area and near the Roman amphitheater. In the narrow streets of the older parts of the city center, crowded conditions invite pickpockets and other petty criminals. Travelers are urged to be more guarded in these areas so that they do not present easy opportunities for criminals.

In central and west Amman, there have been reports of thieves snatching pedestrians' purses from moving vehicles and then driving off. In some instances, victims were injured when they were unable to free themselves from their purses. When carrying a purse, it would be wise to conceal it if possible, to avoid walking near the road within reach of passing vehicles, and to walk against the flow of traffic.

Jordanian police have warned the public to exercise vigilance when leaving banks or ATM machines, as thieves have reportedly preyed upon persons soon after using these services.

Western women both visiting and residing in Jordan report sexual harassment and unwelcome advances of a sexual nature. There have been isolated reports of assault. Women are advised to take reasonable precautions including dressing conservatively and not traveling alone. Modest attire should be worn in deference to local custom.

¶9. (U) TRAVEL GUIDELINES: American citizens and official visitors traveling in Jordan should exercise caution, be alert, and stay informed of regional and local events that could quickly impact the security environment in the country. It is also recommended to maintain a low profile and not establish predictable patterns of movement, even if only visiting for a short period. Taxis are the only form of public transportation that is recommended.

For further information, see the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Jordan at <http://travel.state.gov/jordan.html> and link from that site to the most recent Public Announcement on Travel in the Middle East and South Asia and the most recent Worldwide Caution.

Visit Amman's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.gov.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman/>

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